

1670



1928

Hudson's Bay Company.

INCORPORATED 27th MAY 1670.

Announcing "The Epic of Western Canada"



Being a series of thirty Oil Paintings

By JOHN INNES

on the Sixth Floor

September, 1928



 "All things move Westward Ho It is bound
up in the heart of Man, that longing for the West" 

—Charles Kingsley

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“The Epic of Western Canada”

Foreword by the Artist

IT seems to me most fitting that this pioneer collection of paintings should be shown under the aegis, and by the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company.

From the year 1670 to the year 1869, this great corporation of Adventurers of England were the sole rulers of what we now know as Western Canada. Their word was law, their authority unchallenged. From the immense body of water, from which they derive their title, to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, they carried and maintained the flag of Britain. Now that the inevitable changes which come with the passing years have wrought an almost unbelievable transformation in the vast territory over which they once ruled supreme, we find this Company with their spirit of enterprise and loyalty undimmed, playing their part in our modern commerce and serving the public faithfully and well.

To a man like myself—who knew them in pioneer days—it is a matter of deepest satisfaction to discover that they are not unmindful of the past. For the ready interest and courtesy shown by them in displaying my “Epic of Western Canada” I am sincerely grateful.

Number 216,
601 Hastings St. W.
Vancouver, B. C.,

TITLES OF PAINTINGS
in
"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

Revised

1. "Silence."
2. "Lords of the Wild."
3. "Buffalo Scouts."
4. "When the Blackfeet Hunt."
5. "The Pioneers' Highway."
6. "Treaty."
7. "The Trading Post."
8. "The Travellers."
9. "In the Grip of the Frost."
10. "The Red River Cart."
11. "Prairie Schooners."
12. "The Guardian of the West."
13. "League-Long Furrows."
14. "The Last Survivor."
15. "The Trail of Ashes."
16. "The Red-man's Reverie."
17. "Cattle-Land."
18. "The Cattle Cruiser."
19. "The Prospector."
20. "The Eternal Quest."
21. "In Rory Bory Land."
22. "The Fur Hunters."
23. "Pioneer Lumbering."
24. "Fishers of the Western Gateway."
25. "The Trail Rider."
26. "The Pathfinder."
27. "The Engineer."
28. "The Roaring Devil of the Paleface."
29. "Scarlet and Gold."
30. "Flood-Tide of Opportunity."

Brief Descriptions Follow.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

1. "SILENCE"

*"When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained:
what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the
son of man that Thou visitest him?"—(THE PSALMS.)*

Wrapped in an age-long silence, this great land lay.
Only the sound of dipping paddle, the occasional cries
of primitive hunt or battle, the pulsing beat of the red-
man's tom-tom or the plaint of wild creatures, broke
upon its dreaming.

2. "LORDS OF THE WILD"

*"And on stupendous steppes of peerless plain,
And in the rocky gloom of canyons deep,
There lived a soul more wild than barbarous;
A tameless soul—the sunburnt savage free—
Free and untainted by the greed of gain,
Great Nature's man, content with Nature's food."*

(CHARLES MAIR.)

Each in their own loosely-defined hunting territory,
the various Indian tribes were lords of the west. Soil
and native game supplied their food, clothing, shelter
and medicaments. Nomadic in their habits; cherishing
each their own culture and ideals, these primitive Cana-
dians form a subject for fascinating study, that more
and more occupies attention as time passes.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

3. "BUFFALO SCOUTS"

*"They loved us, but they wasted not. They slew
With pious hand, but for their daily need;
Not wantonly, but as the due
Of stern necessity which Life doth breed."*

(*"The Bison Speaks"*—MAIR.)

The vast plains, east of the Rocky Mountains, were the favorite feeding-grounds of innumerable herds of bison. The meat, hides, fur and by-products of these animals filled the major needs of the prairie Indians. In this picture, scouts are shown, one of whom makes "the sign of the buffalo" in order to apprise the hunters of their find.

Over the mountains hangs the "Chinook Arch," indicating a westerly wind, thus making the position of both Indian and buffalo ideal for the hunting.

4. "WHEN THE BLACKFEET HUNT"

*"Their bones lie bleached 'mid the dusty grass,
By the gash of the White Man's share;
And only in dreams, wild brothers o' mine,
Do we live in the days that were."*

From behind a long low hill, a line of nearly naked Indians, mounted upon their hunting ponies, race with wild yells towards a grazing herd of bison. Snorting and bellowing, the frightened animals flee from the threatening danger. A spear-thrust that failed: A shaggy brute, frenzied with pain, hurls his mighty bulk at his tormentor—a horse and rider fall, and in falling, the breech-cloth of the Indian is caught upon the thick, curved horn of the buffalo. Another Indian dashes to the rescue of his fellow. It is the fortune of the chase. The hunt, that means life or starvation to the red-men, thunders on and away.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

5. "THE PIONEERS' HIGHWAY"

*"Now in the churn and the lather, foam that hisses and
stings,
Leap we, keyed for the struggle, fury and fume and
roar;
Rocks are spitting like bell-cats—Ob, it's a sport for
kings:
Life on a twist of the paddle!"*

(SERVICE)

At last came the white man—through whose toil and resourcefulness the untold treasures of this vast terrain were to be made of service to the world.

Daring and enduring, these pioneers penetrated deeper and deeper into the unknown west. Nothing could stop them. Savage hostility and natural dangers of every sort made their challenge and were overcome. Their light canoes carried themselves and their articles of trade into the farthest wilderness.

6. "TREATY"

*"Great Mother! We have wondered that thy sons,
Thy pale sons, should have left thy side and come
To these wild plains, and sought the haunts of bears
And red men. They came to us at night,
As we were sat in council round the fire."*

("Indian Hymn to the Queen"—SCOTT.)

Through years of contact and trading, a mutual understanding grew between the traders and the natives. Agreements were entered into, and, around the council-fire, the pipe of friendship was passed.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

7. "THE TRADING POST"

*"What give that flag its virtue?
What's thar' in red and blue?*

* * * * *

*Jes' this—an' Injuns know'd it—
That whar' them cullers flew,
The men that lived beneath them
Wur mostly straight an' true."*

(BARRY DANE)

Gentlemen Adventurers of the Hudson's Bay Company built sturdy trading-posts throughout the West, and, by fair but stern methods, won the confidence and co-operation of the Indians. This Company made the West possible.

8. "THE TRAVELLERS"

*"Many footsteps pressed here; centuries ago
The Red Men fought and conquered; lost and won.
Whole tribes and races, gone like last year's snow,
Have found the Eternal Hunting Grounds."*

(BRYANT.)

The Indians rode a land that was—yet was not—their own. They were free to travel at will—under direction. An alien power controlled their comings and goings, and an alien system of trade governed their hunting and possessions.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

9. "IN THE GRIP OF THE FROST"

*"A bold land, a cold land,
Where the wind is flowing free."*

When the winter closed in and the land was locked
"In the Grip of the Frost," the travelling Indians scurried for the shelter of their favorite camping places. When the blizzard made a grey expanse of nature and the sun-dogs hung in the sky, any copse and stream formed a haven.

10. "THE RED RIVER CART"

*"Yes, times have changed since the early days; farming
is now an art;
They seek land in motor-cars—we creaked in a
River Cart!
They're binding the earth with railway lines, netting
the world with wires,
Leaving the mail at our corner-posts, pampering our
desires."*

(STEAD.)

By ones and twos, twenties and hundreds, these vehicles—composed entirely of wood—creaked over the prairie trails. They were the freight-trains of the pioneers. Each cart carried about eight hundred pounds.

11. "PRAIRIE SCHOONERS"

*"God took care to hide that country till He judged his
people ready,
Then He chose us for His Whisper, and we found it,
and it's yours!"*

(KIPLING.)

These rocking, white-topped wagons looked like ships, as they rolled and swayed over the sea of grass. Hence their name. Many of Canada's foremost western sons and daughters reached their final destination by means of the prairie schooner.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

12. "THE GUARDIAN OF THE WEST"

*"Our mission is to raise the Flag
Of Britain's Empire here,
Restrain the lawless savage
And protect the Pioneer;
And 'tis a proud and daring trust
To hold these vast Domains
With but three hundred Mounted Men,
The Riders of the Plains."*

(CONSTABLE T. A. BOYS)

"For nearly half a century through Canada's great plains, the red coat of the mounted policeman was the visible and definite assurance that Right was Might. A red speck on the horizon was notice to both weak and strong, honest and dishonest, that the rule of law prevailed; while experience taught white men and red that 'Law' meant even-handed justice as between man and man without fear or favor."—(*Hon. Frank Oliver, of Edmonton.*)

13. "LEAGUE-LONG FURROWS"

*"To the far-flung, fenceless prairie
Where the quick cloud-shadows trail,
To our neighbor's barn in the offing
And the line of the new-cut rail;
To the plough in her league-long furrow
With the grey Lake gulls behind—
To the weight of a half-year's winter,
And the warm wet western wind!"*

(KIPLING.)

Canada's Thousand-Mile Farm stretches from Winnipeg to Calgary and from the United States boundary-line to the northern borders of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Within this area is land enough, if tilled, to feed every mouth in Europe—such was the prophecy of James J. Hill, the railway magnate of the American West. The grain-growing portion of that region has been estimated at 200,000,000 acres. Further to the northwest, again, still another rich agricultural empire is in course of rapid settlement—"The Peace River."

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

14. "THE LAST SURVIVOR"

(The Bison Speaks)

*"Here must the last of all his kindred fall,
Yet, 'midst these gathering shadows, ere I die—
Responsive to an inward call—
My spirit fain would rise and prophesy
I see our spoilers build their cities great
Upon our plains. I see their rich estate."*

(CHARLES MAIR)

On this subject there need be small comment. Whilst the vast herds of bison roamed the land, settlement was impossible. Nothing could stop their progress; nothing deny their needs.

They are gone; and in their place are a few man-controlled herds that, at least, preserve the species from annihilation and afford the basis for a form of breeding that shall be of human service.

15. "THE TRAIL OF ASHES"

*"On other fields and other scenes the morn
Laughs from her blue—but not such scenes as these,
Where now there comes no cheer of leaves and bees."*

(C. D. G. ROBERTS.)

From sunny plains the trail leads the mounted Indians into the dusty discomfort of Burnt Lands. For years after treaty-signing, the Indian travelled a mental trail-of-ashes. His sunlit past, with its careless insouciance; with fighting, buffalo, horses and creature-comfort as its goal, was gone. Ahead was a stretch of years devoid of all his former concepts and ambitions—years in which he must readjust his whole mental outlook. 'Twas indeed a "Trail of Ashes"!

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

16. "THE RED MAN'S REVERIE"

*"A little heap of embers—
Yea! a miracle divine,
The footprint of a god,
All-potent Fire."*

In his legends, the Indian preserves the tale of the origin of fire. Over his small bundle of burning sticks, the old medicine-man dreams of the pregnant past.

17. "CATTLE LAND"

*"White Man's country past disputing—
Rolling grass and open timber,
With a hint of hills behind."*

(KIPLING.)

Here is depicted the typical stock-range of the Albertan country. King Buffalo's dynasty has passed; King Steer reigns in his stead.

18. "THE CATTLE CRUISER"

*"Ab! lone the life they follow,
And rough the roads they ride—
The right men, the white men,
The men of Sunset Side."*

The cowboy was and still is a picturesque, yet fading, figure. His sphere is yearly contracting, and soon he will be a part of the past.

19. "THE PROSPECTOR"

*"I rode up Old Bonanza, where I staked in '98,
A-purpose to revisit the old claim;
I kept thinking mighty sadly of the funny ways of
Fate
And the lads who once were with me in the game."*
(SERVICE.)

The grizzled old-time prospector, pictured here, has almost vanished. In his place we find bespectacled college men, with weird tools. Exploring for mineral-values is now a science.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

20. "THE ETERNAL QUEST"

*"When once you've panned the speckled sand and seen
the bonny dust,
Its peerless brightness blinds you like a spell;
It's little else you care about; you go because you
must,
And you feel that you could follow it to Hell."*

(SERVICE.)

Pan, shovel and pick formed the working kit of the early gold-seekers. Creviceing the creeks, panning the gravel, they scoured the country for "poor man's prospects." Sometimes they were richly rewarded—generally not.

21. "IN RORY BORY LAND"

*"Never was seen such a cohort
Under one banner enrolled,
As surged to the ragged-edged Arctic,
Urged by the arch-tempter—Gold!"*

(SERVICE.)

Daylight is a rare luxury in the North. Under the Arctic moon, over an expanse of hard snow, lit by the dancing fingers of the Aurora, the vagrant members of Gold's fevered army pass. Dog-sleds and packers of every sort follow the trail of the Yellow Metal.

22. "THE FUR-HUNTERS"

*"Trapping for skins in the North,
Beaver and bear and raccoon,
Marten and mink from the wooded belts,
Otter and ermine and sable pelts—
The spoils of the Hunter's Moon!"*

(PAULINE JOHNSON.)

When the leaves turn and the first snow falls, the trappers trek for their cabin in the hills. This will be their home for the winter and from it they will wander and set their trap-lines.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

23. "PIONEER LUMBERING"

*"The axes in the solitary wood
Rang out where stately pine and maple stood;
The land became alive with busy din,
And as the many settled, more came in."*

The ring of the axe heralds the song of the saw. Such primitive mills as shown here still play a large part in outlying districts, where it is yet the custom to haul the logs down toilsomely-constructed skid-roads by means of oxen.

24. "FISHERS OF THE WESTERN GATEWAY"

*"Upon us dependeth a multitude—
Prosper the work of our hands,
That we may feed with our sea's food
The folk of all our lands."*

(AFTER KIPLING.)

Many years ago, when the fishing industry of British Columbia was still young, one of the most beautiful sights was that of the Fraser River fishing fleet at sunset. As the sun sank behind Vancouver Island, the sky blazed into almost unbelievable color. The waters of the Gulf reflected the glory and the myriad sails of the fishing boats formed a centre of shifting light.

25. "THE TRAIL RIDER"

*"Away! nor let me loiter on my lonely path,
For I have many a mountain-trail to tread."*

Before the days of the railroad, the high trails were the highways over the mountains. Cattle were driven along them, pack-trains followed their steep sinuosities, and the old trail-riders knew their every turn and danger.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

26. "THE PATHFINDER"

*"Well I know who'll take the credit—all the clever
chaps that followed—
Came, a dozen men together—never knew my desert-
fears;
Tracked me by the camps I'd quitted, used the water-
holes I'd hollowed—
They'll go back and do the talking. They'll be
called the Pioneers!"*

(KIPLING.)

Wise in the lore of the hills, the path-finders searched out new trails through the masses of rock and forest. A saddle-pony, a pack-pony, an axe and a rifle, filled their modest requirements.

27. "THE ENGINEER"

*"Cleaving the mountain barriers,
Opening the long-closed gates."*

Following in the footsteps of the pioneer path-finders came the locating engineers, scanning the mountain-steeps for a possible footing for the Iron Horse.

28. "THE ROARING DEVIL OF THE PALEFACE"

*"Until at length the double lines of steel
Received the steaming steed and whirling wheel!"*

(STEAD.)

The last spikes have been driven and the Indians, in dismay, see their silent plains and hills invaded by a monster whose roar and hissing stampedes their trembling mounts.

"THE EPIC OF WESTERN CANADA"

29. "SCARLET AND GOLD"

*"In the little Crimson Manual
It is written plain and clear
That who would wear the scarlet coat
Shall say good-bye to Fear."*

(SERVICE.)

Their "beat" including creek-bottom and mountain-top, the Mounted Police have been a priceless asset to the Canadian people and to the Empire.

30. "FLOOD-TIDE OF OPPORTUNITY"

*"I hear the tread of pioneers
Of nations yet to be—
The first low wash of waves
Where soon shall roll a human sea."*

(WHITTIER.)

This symbolic painting is the last of the series. The picturesque figures of frontier days are shown as being inevitably driven into the shadows before the flowing tide of progress, as typified by the growing sea of wheat.

The sturdy pioneers of mine and forest, the founders of the great fishing industries, the fathers of the tremendous commercial life of Western Canada, have, many of them, lived to see their early efforts crowned with unheard-of success—and this is but the Beginning!

For all who have the pioneer spirit to do and to endure, the matchless resources of this great land offer a vast field of profitable action.

*THE Twentieth Century is CANADA'S—
It is YET ONLY MORNING in the North-West—
Come in on the Flood-tide of Opportunity!*



GOD SAVE THE KING.

